DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 323 193 SP 032 577

AUTHOR McCann, Kaye R.
TITLE School Discipline: Perspectives of Delaware Public School Teachers.
INSTITUTION Delaware State Dept. of Public Instruction, Dover.
PUB DATE Feb 89
NOTE 26p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Analysis; *Discipline; Elementary Secondary Education; *National Surveys; *Public School Teachers; Student Behavior; *Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS *Delaware

ABSTRACT

A survey of Delaware public school teachers in 1988 duplicated the 1986 nation-wide survey, "Public School Teacher Perspectives on School Discipline," conducted by the Center for Education Statistics. The Delaware study was also intended to allow comparisons to be made between national and Delaware data. The sampling frame consisted of all 142 regular public schools in Delaware classified by both school level and type of locale. A total of 465 teachers were surveyed. A comparison between the findings of the two surveys indicated: (1) Delaware teachers more frequently report that the amount of disruptive behavior has increased over the past 5 years; (2) proportionately more Delaware teachers report that they have considered leaving teaching due to student misbehavior; (3) a majority of teachers both nationwide and within Delaware report that while student misbehavior has little impact on their teaching, it does interfere with effective student learning; and (4) junior and senior high school teachers both nationwide and in Delaware report a higher incidence of disciplinary infractions or drug/alcohol use among students than do teachers at the elementary level; (5) a higher percentage of Delaware teachers report having been threatened by students; and (6) teachers nationwide and in Delaware have similar perceptions of the factors limiting their ability to maintain discipline, of school discipline policies, and of actions to improve school discipline. A copy of the survey is appended. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

SP

ED323193

SCHOOL DISCIPLINE: PERSPECTIVES OF DELAWARE PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS

By: Kaye R. McCann, State Specialist
Educational Assessment
Research and Evaluation Division

STATE OF DELAWARE

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Dover, Delaware 19903

SP032577

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. R. Williams

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

February 1989

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

(Vacant), *President*
Mrs. Elise Grossman, Wilmington, *Vice-President*
Arthur W. Boswell, Wilmington
Richard M. Farmer, New Castle
Dr. Kent S. Price, Milton
R. Jefferson Reed, Dover

OFFICERS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Townsend Building
P.O. Box 1402
Dover, Delaware 19903

William B. Keene, *State Superintendent*
John J. Ryan, *Deputy State Superintendent*
Sidney B. Collison, *Deputy State Superintendent*
Henry C. Harper, *Executive Assistant*
James L. Spartz, *Assistant State Superintendent*
Administrative Services Branch
Primo V. Toccafondi, *Assistant State Superintendent*
Instructional Services Branch

The Delaware Department of Public Instruction does not discriminate in employment or educational programs, services or activities, based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, or handicap in accordance with the State and Federal laws. Inquiries should be directed to Department of Public Instruction, Business and Personnel Manager, P.O. Box 1402, Dover, Delaware 19903, Area Code (302) 736-4605.

This publication is available in microfiche from the Bureau of Archives and Records, Hall of Records, P.O. Box 1401, Dover, Delaware 19903, and printed in the U.S.A.

Document No. 95-01/89/02/10
R & E No. 89-8

SCHOOL DISCIPLINE: PERSPECTIVES OF DELAWARE PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS

INTRODUCTION

In 1986 the Center for Education Statistics (CES), U.S. Department of Education, conducted a survey to obtain the views of a nationally representative sample of public elementary and secondary school teachers on the issue of school discipline. In the Fall of 1988, the Research and Evaluation Division of the Delaware Department of Public Instruction repeated this study, as closely as possible, to determine the perspectives Delaware public school teachers have on discipline in Delaware. While both studies share the purpose of identifying teacher perspectives on school discipline, the Delaware survey was also intended to allow comparisons to be made between the 1986 national data and the 1988 Delaware data.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Sample Selection

In August of 1988 an intern from the Department of Mathematical Sciences in the University of Delaware, working with the Research and Evaluation Division, devised a two-stage stratified sampling procedure for the Delaware study. The sampling strategy was designed to provide a sample representative of the regular classroom teachers in Delaware. The sampling frame consisted of all 142 regular public schools in Delaware classified by both school level and type of locale.

As in the national study, three school levels were identified:

1. Elementary: Schools in which the lowest grade is less than 6 and the highest grade is less than 9.
2. Junior High: Schools in which the lowest grade is greater than 5 and the highest grade is less than 10.
3. Senior High: Schools in which the lowest grade is greater than 6 and the highest grade is greater than 9.

Due to the demographic characteristics of the State of Delaware, the categories for type of locale are somewhat different from those used in the 1986 national study. The categories of urban, suburban, and rural used in the national study were deemed to be inappropriate for this study. The three types of locale used in the Delaware study were:

1. Urban Fringe: A closely settled area contiguous to a central city, with a minimum population of 2,500 inhabitants, a population density of at least 1,000/square mile, and a Census Urbanized Area Code.

2. Small Town: An area not contiguous to any city or urban fringe area, with a minimum population of 2,500 inhabitants, a population density of at least 1,000/square mile, and no Census Urbanized Area Code.

3. Rural: An area with less than 2,500 inhabitants and/or a population density of less than 1,000/square mile, and no Census Urbanized Area Code.

After stratification, a sample of 95 regular public schools were selected with probabilities proportional to the number of full-time teachers in each school. At the second stage of selection, approximately 5 teachers were randomly chosen from each selected school. A total of 465 teachers were surveyed. Table 1 provides an overview of the allocation of teachers to the various strata:

Table 1

Allocation of Teachers Surveyed in the Delaware Discipline Study

	School Level			
Type of Locale	Elementary	Junior	Senior	Total
Urban Fringe	95	66	70	231
Small Town	59	44	50	153
Rural	31	25	25	81
TOTAL	**185**	**135**	**145**	**465**

Instrumentation

The same survey form was used in both the national and Delaware studies. A copy is included as an Appendix to this report.

Data Collection

Data from Delaware teachers were collected during November and December of 1988 by means of a mail survey with telephone follow-up. Timing of the Delaware study was planned so as to coincide with the timing of the national study which was conducted between October of 1986 and January of 1987. Survey forms and letters explaining the study were mailed to the selected teachers via the state mail system. All participants were assured that their responses would be kept confidential. The overall response rate for this survey was 72%. Table 2 provides an overview of the response rate of teachers in the various strata.

Data Analysis

Responses of Delaware teachers participating in the survey were analyzed using a computerized statistical package. The statistics reported are limited to percentages and mean occurrences per teacher.

Table 2

Response Rate of Teachers Surveyed in the Delaware Discipline Study

	School Level			
Type of Locale	Elementary	Junior	Senior	Total
Urban Fringe	77%	76%	73%	75%
Small Town	61%	64%	76%	67%
Rural	71%	64%	76%	70%
TOTAL	**71%**	**70%**	**74%**	**72%**

SURVEY FINDINGS

Comparison of the Current Amount of Disruptive Behavior With That of Five Years Ago

Overall, 54% of Delaware teachers in public elementary and secondary schools, as compared with 44% nationwide, indicated that the amount of disruptive behavior has increased when compared with five years before (Table 3). Twenty-five percent of Delaware teachers (28% nationwide) stated the amount of disruptive behavior was about the same, while 21% of Delaware teachers (27% nationwide) indicated it was less. In contrast to the national study which indicated that elementary teachers (53%) most frequently reported an increase in disruptive behavior, the Delaware survey showed that junior high teachers (60%) most frequently indicated an increase. Fifty-seven percent of the elementary teachers and 45% of the senior high school teachers in Delaware likewise reported increases. Delaware teachers from all three types of locale (urban fringe, small town, and rural) more frequently perceived an increase in disruptive behavior than did teachers nationwide. (Table 3)

Figure 1

Perceived Amount of Current Disruptive Classroom Behavior in Public Schools Compared to Five Years Ago

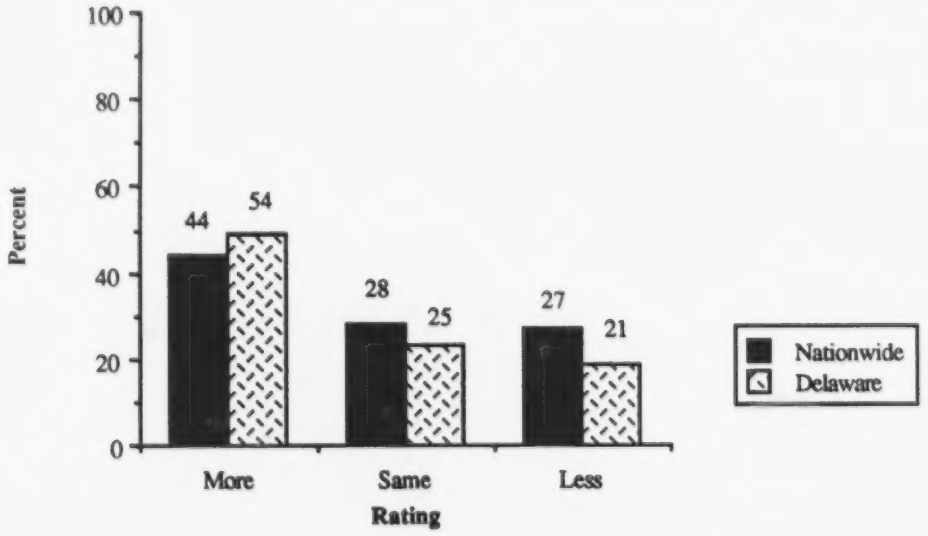


Table 3

Teacher evaluation of the change in disruptive student behavior, by school level and type of locale. (Delaware/National Sample)

School characteristic	Percent of teachers indicating that compared to five years ago disruptive student behavior is				
	Much less now D/N	Somewhat less now D/N	About the same D/N	Somewhat more now D/N	Much more now D/N
All teachers	8/10	13/17	25/28	24/25	30/19
School level					
Elementary	9/8	14/12	20/27	28/29	29/24
Junior High	7/13	7/22	27/24	22/22	38/20
Senior High	7/12	20/23	29/32	22/22	23/12
Type of locale					
Urban Fringe/ Urban	6/15	14/16	25/20	24/23	32/26
Small Town/ Suburban	11/8	16/16	22/32	27/26	23/18
Rural	6/11	8/19	30/28	20/26	36/16

Note: Percents may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Impact of Student Behavior on Teaching and Learning

Over one-third (37%) of Delaware public school teachers, as compared with 29% of teachers nationwide, indicated they had ever seriously considered leaving the teaching profession because of student misbehavior. Similarly, 28% of Delaware teachers, as compared with 17% nationwide, reported they had seriously considered leaving in the past twelve months (Table 4). In both studies, junior high school teachers most frequently reported having ever seriously considered leaving teaching because of student misbehavior (Delaware 43%; Nationwide 33%). In contrast to the national study which reported urban teachers (33%) as most frequently having ever considered leaving the profession because of student misbehavior, the Delaware study indicates that this state's rural teachers (44%) had most frequently ever considered leaving teaching. (Table 4)

There is little difference between the perceptions of teachers nationwide and those of Delaware teachers concerning the extent to which student misbehavior interferes with either their teaching or with effective learning. In both studies, approximately three-fourths of the teachers indicated that student misbehavior interfered with their teaching to a small or moderate extent. A small percentage, 14% nationwide and 15% within Delaware, reported that student misbehavior interfered with their teaching to a great extent. Similarly, only 11% of the teachers nationwide and 10% of Delaware teachers reported that student misbehavior had no effect on their teaching. The data in both studies indicate that some teachers do distinguish between the impact of student behavior on their teaching and its impact on student learning. In both studies, a majority of teachers reported that student misbehavior interferes either to a small extent or not at all with their teaching. In contrast, a majority also report that student misbehavior interferes with effective learning to either a great or moderate extent . (Table 4)

Teachers report drug or alcohol use interferes more extensively with student learning at the junior and senior high school levels. Eight percent of Delaware senior high school teachers and 1% of the junior high school teachers report that drug or alcohol use interferes with learning to a great extent. Eighteen percent of senior high and 15% of junior high teachers within Delaware report it interferes to a moderate extent. In comparison with the national study, 26% of Delaware senior high school teachers as opposed to 32% of senior high school teachers nationwide perceive drug or alcohol use to interfere with learning to a great or moderate extent. However, 16% of Delaware's junior high teachers report a great or moderate extent of interference with learning, as opposed to 11% in the national study. See Figure 2 and Table 4.

Table 4

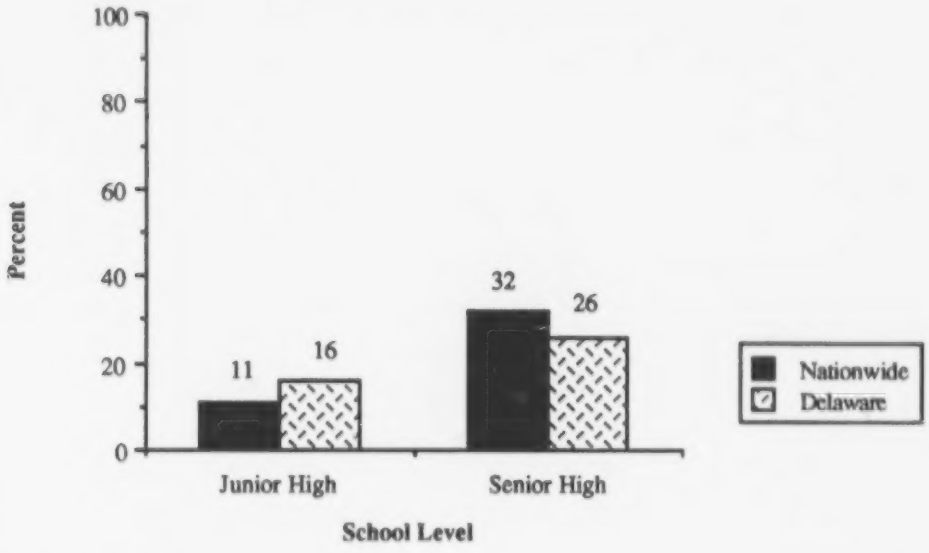
Percent of teachers indicating they had seriously considered leaving teaching because of student misbehavior, and teacher evaluation of the extent to which student behavior and drug or alcohol use interferes with teaching and learning, by school level and type of locale. (Delaware/National Sample)

Item	Total % D/N	School Level			Type of Locale		
		Elementary D/N	Junior High D/N	Senior High D/N	Urban Fringe/ Urban D/N	Small Town/ Suburban D/N	Rural D/N
Percent of teachers indicating they had seriously considered leaving because of student misbehavior:							
Ever considered leaving	37/29	37/28	43/33	31/29	36/33	34/29	44/27
Considered leaving in last 12 months	28/17	28/15	34/19	23/19	30/19	26/17	25/16
Extent to which student behavior interferes with:							
Their teaching							
To a great extent	15/14	16/16	22/14	8/11	16/24	15/14	15/8
To a moderate extent	27/26	29/26	27/26	25/24	33/20	20/27	24/27
To a small extent	47/50	46/48	44/52	52/50	44/47	52/49	48/52
Not at all	10/11	9/9	8/8	14/15	7/8	14/11	13/13
Effective learning							
To a great extent	18/27	16/28	24/28	16/24	18/34	21/28	15/20
To a moderate extent	35/27	37/26	36/25	31/30	39/25	31/27	27/29
To a small extent	37/38	38/39	31/43	41/35	35/33	36/38	44/42
Not at all	10/8	9/7	9/4	12/11	8/8	11/7	13/9
Extent to which student drug or alcohol use interferes with learning:							
To a great extent	3/4	1/2	1/3	8/8	4/6	2/4	2/4
To a moderate extent	11/10	1/1	15/8	18/24	11/14	6/10	17/8
To a small extent	39/39	15/20	47/59	61/57	39/37	42/38	37/42
Not at all	47/46	84/76	36/30	13/11	46/43	50/48	44/47

NOTE: Percents may not total to 100 due to rounding.

Figure 2

Percent of Teachers Reporting That Drug or Alcohol Use Interferes with Student Learning to a Great or Moderate Extent.



Incidence of Discipline Infractions

To obtain estimates of the incidence of classroom disruption, teachers were asked to report the number of times specified minor infractions had occurred in their own classrooms in the last full week. They were also asked to report the number of times specified major infractions had been observed or reported to them in the last full month. Teachers were asked to report the number of occurrences rather than the number of students committing infractions since a particular student might commit multiple infractions. Tables 5 and 6 show the percent of teachers reporting occurrences and the mean number of occurrences per teacher of minor and major classroom disruptions, by school level and by type of locale.

Minor Infractions Occurring in the Classroom in the Last Week

The minor infractions included in the studies were (1) student note passing and whispering, (2) student being late for class, (3) student talking back, (4) student throwing something and (5) student being absent without permission. The percent of Delaware teachers reporting at least one occurrence of the minor infractions per week ranged from 84% for whispering or note passing to 36% for being absent

without permission. On the average, for the last full week prior to completing the survey, Delaware teachers reported 17.5 instances of disruptive whispering or note passing, 4.9 instances of a student being late, 3.6 instances of a student talking back, 1.6 instances of a student throwing something, and 1.3 instances of a student being absent without permission. These mean occurrences per teacher are very similar to those reported in the national study. Also, data from both studies indicated that the specified minor infractions occur more frequently at the junior and senior high levels. For example, in the survey of Delaware teachers, unexcused absenteeism and tardiness occurred most frequently in senior high schools; note passing, whispering, talking back, and throwing things occurred most frequently in junior high schools. Likewise, the data from both surveys also indicated that minor infractions consistently occur most frequently in urban/urban fringe schools.

Major Infractions Observed or Reported in the Last Month

The major infractions included in the studies were (1) a physical fight between students, (2) a student intentionally damaging property, (3) an item worth over $1.00 being stolen from either a teacher or student, (4) a student appearing to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, (5) a student threatening a teacher, and (6) a student displaying and/or using a weapon. The percent of Delaware teachers reporting or observing at least one occurrence of a major infraction in the last full month before survey completion ranged from 46% for a physical fight between students to 5% for a student displaying and/or using a weapon. The mean number of occurrences per month per teacher ranged from .1 for displaying and/or using a weapon to 1.7 for a physical fight between students. There was not a great deal of variation between the mean number of occurrences reported per teacher in the national and Delaware studies. As with the incidence of minor infractions, both studies find that specified major infractions occur more frequently at the junior and senior high levels. Based on the number of mean occurrences per teacher, theft and alcohol or drug use occur most frequently in senior high schools; threats and physical fights occur most frequently in junior high schools. An analysis of the mean occurrences per teacher by type of locale indicates a difference in some of the perceptions of Delaware teachers and those nationwide. For example, the national study reported that property damage occurred most frequently in urban areas while data from the Delaware study indicate that this infraction occurs most frequently in rural areas.

Table 5

Percent of teachers reporting occurrences and mean occurrences per teacher of minor and major classroom disruptions, by school level. (Delaware/National Sample)

Infraction	Percent of teachers reporting occurrences				Mean occurrences per teacher			
	Total %	School level			Total	School level		
		Elem.	Junior High	Senior High		Elem.	Junior High	Senior High
	D/N	D/N	D/N	D/N	D/N	D/N	D/N	D/N
Minor infractions: Occurrences in teachers' classroom in last full week					(In last week)			
Student passed note or whispered	84/85	75/84	93/89	89/86	17.5/17.3	12.8/17.1	22.9/20.0	19.1/16.0
Student was late for class	82/82	73/74	86/88	90/91	4.9/5.3	3.2/3.0	5.1/5.7	6.7/8.6
Student talked back	62/55	54/52	73/66	61/54	3.6/2.9	3.6/2.9	4.6/3.7	2.7/2.6
Student threw something	50/44	43/40	66/55	45/43	1.6/1.9	1.2/1.4	2.4/3.4	1.4/1.9
Student was absent without permission	36/32	22/16	36/35	54/56	1.3/1.6	1.0/.4	1.0/1.1	1.8/3.6
Other minor disruptions	76/62	79/68	78/66	69/51	9.5/7.4	9.6/8.7	14.2/7.9	5.6/5.3
Major infractions: Teachers observed or had reported to them over the last full month					(In last month)			
Physical fight occurred among students	46/42	42/45	62/48	37/35	1.7/1.3	1.8/1.4	2.3/1.6	1.0/1.0
Student intentionally damaged property	32/33	24/29	47/39	28/37	1.1/1.0	.6/.6	1.3/1.4	1.5/1.4
Item over $1.00 stolen from teacher or student	23/23	22/20	26/27	22/26	.7/.6	.4/.5	.8/.7	.9/.9
Student seemed under influence of drugs or alcohol	23/22	3/5	36/28	35/45	1.1/1.3	.1/.2	1.3/1.1	2.2/3.1
Student threatened you	8/5	4/5	16/6	6/5	.2/.1	.1/.1	.2/.1	.1/.1
Student displayed and or used weapon	5/5	5/5	7/5	3/4	.1/.1	.1/.1	.1/.1	.0/.1
Other major infractions	16/11	16/9	21/14	1/12	1.1/.4	1.0/.3	.9/.6	1.3/.4

Table 6

Percent of teachers reporting occurrences and mean occurrences per teacher of minor and major classroom disruptions, by type of locale. (Delaware/National Sample)

Infraction	Percent of teachers reporting occurrences				Mean occurrences per teacher			
	Total %	Type of locale			Total	Type of locale		
		Urban Fringe/ Urban	Small Town/ Suburban	Rural		Urban Fringe/ Urban	Small Town/ Suburban	Rural
	D/N	D/N	D/N	D/N	D/N	D/N	D/N	D/N
Minor infractions: Occurrences in teachers' classroom in last full week					(In last week)			
Student passed note or whispered	84/85	83/84	84/85	88/86	17.5/17.3	23.3/21.3	12.3/18.5	10.3/13.0
Student was late for class	82/82	87/89	72/83	85/78	4.9/5.3	6.5/7.9	3.0/5.4	3.2/3.6
Student talked back	62/55	60/53	66/57	58/54	3.6/2.9	4.0/4.4	3.4/2.9	2.7/2.1
Student threw something	50/44	50/47	48/45	50/39	1.6/1.9	1.9/2.5	1.3/2.0	1.5/1.4
Student was absent without permission	36/32	43/42	30/33	28/26	1.3/1.6	1.5/2.8	1.3/1.5	.5/.9
Other minor disruptions	76/62	76/60	76/62	71/63	9.5/7.4	12.2/8.6	7.5/7.5	5.4/6.5
Major infractions: Teachers observed or had reported to them over the last full month					(In last month)			
Physical fight occurred among students	46/42	48/50	41/38	48/42	1.7/1.3	2.1/2.1	1.1/1.0	1.3/1.1
Student intentionally damaged property	32/33	35/39	28/34	26/29	1.1/1.0	.9/1.2	.8/.9	2.2/1.1
Item over $1.00 stolen from teacher or student	23/23	23/27	21/21	25/23	.7/.6	.5/.8	.6/.5	1.4/.8
Student seemed under influence of drugs or alcohol	23/22	22/25	19/22	30/21	1.1/1.3	1.6/1.3	.4/1.6	.7/.9
Student threatened you	8/5	9/10	5/4	9/3	.2/.1	.2/.2	.1/.1	.1/.1
Student displayed or used weapon	5/5	6/9	2/3	6/3	.1/.1	.1/.2	.0/.1	.1/.1
Other major infractions	16/11	15/12	17/11	16/11	1.1/.4	.6/.4	1.3/.4	2.2/.4

Threats and Physical Attacks to Teachers

Twenty-eight percent of Delaware teachers, as compared with 19% nationwide, reported they had been threatened by a student at some time; eleven percent of Delaware teachers and 8% of teachers nationwide reported student threats within the last 12 months. In both studies, school level was an important variable with junior high teachers (39% in Delaware and 26% nationwide) most frequently reporting student threats. The impact of type of locale on teacher response was less conclusive. While the national study reported urban teachers to be most frequently threatened, there was little variation between Delaware teachers in urban fringe, small town, and rural locations. (Table 7)

Teachers in both studies reported physical attacks by students less frequently than they reported threats. Twelve percent of Delaware teachers and 8% of teachers nationwide report they have ever been physically attacked by a student. Similarly, 5% of Delaware teachers and 2% of teachers nationwide report experiencing physical attacks in the last 12 months. An analysis of responses by school level shows Delaware junior high teachers (15%) most frequently reporting physical attacks, while nationwide elementary teachers (9%) most frequently reported being attacked physically. Data from both studies indicate that rural teachers are less likely to experience physical attack than are urban fringe/urban or small town/suburban teachers. (Table 7)

Percent of Students Considered Habitual Behavior Problems

In both the national and Delaware studies, teachers reported that about 7% of the students they taught were habitual behavior problems. Although nationwide the highest mean percent of students considered habitual behavior problems was reported by elementary teachers (7.4%) within Delaware the highest mean percent was reported by junior high school teachers (8.3%). The impact of type of locale on teacher response was less conclusive with urban teachers nationwide reporting the highest mean percent (8.1%) but Delaware rural teachers reporting the highest mean percent (7.4%) of students considered habitual behavior problems. (Table 7)

Table 7

Mean percent of students considered habitual behavior problems, percent of teachers threatened, and percent physically attacked by students, by school level and type of locale. (Delaware/National Sample)

School characteristic	Mean percent of students considered habitual behavior problems D/N	Percent of teachers: Ever threatened by student D/N	Threatened in last 12 months D/N	Ever physically attacked by student D/N	Attacked physically in last 12 months D/N
All teachers	7.1/7.0	28/19	11/8	12/8	5/2
School level					
Elementary	7.3/7.4	20/14	10/7	13/9	7/3
Junior High	8.3/6.6	39/26	18/9	15/7	5/2
Senior High	5.8/6.7	27/21	8/9	7/7	2/2
Type of locale					
Urban Fringe/Urban	7.2/8.1	28/25	14/14	12/11	8/3
Small Town/Suburban	6.7/7.1	28/17	10/7	12/8	1/3
Rural	7.4/6.1	27/17	7/6	9/6	2/2

Ratings of Factors Limiting Discipline in Their Schools

Teachers were asked the extent to which specific factors limited their ability to maintain order and discipline within their schools. These factors, listed in Tables 8 and 9, include such things as lack of student interest in learning, lack of administrative support, and fear of being sued. As a whole, teachers did not consider most of the factors as greatly limiting their efforts to maintain order. For all factors listed, a minority of teachers responding in either the national or Delaware surveys indicated they were limited either "much" or "very much". The two factors most frequently rated as limiting teachers in maintaining discipline either "much" or "very much" were: lack of or inadequate alternative placements for disruptive students (Delaware teachers - 45%; Nationwide teachers - 39%) and lack of student interest in learning (38% in both studies). When compared with teachers nationwide, fewer Delaware teachers see inadequate teacher training in discipline procedures and school law to be a factor limiting their ability to maintain order. Delaware

teachers are also less fearful of either legal suit or student reprisal than teachers nationwide. (Table 8)

Table 8

Teacher ratings of the extent to which selected factors limited their ability to maintain order and discipline at their school. (Delaware/National Sample)

Factor	Much or very much* D/N	Little or somewhat* D/N	Very little or not at all* D/N
		(Percent)	
Lack of or inadequate alternative placements/programs for disruptive students	45/39	24/26	30/35
Lack of student interest in learning	38/38	40/38	22/24
School or district restrictions on use of strict penalties	28/22	24/28	48/49
Lack of administrative support	19/20	28/23	53/57
Likelihood of complaint from parents	15/19	35/37	51/44
Principal/administrator fear of being sued for disciplining students	13/18	23/25	65/57
Teacher fear of being sued for disciplining students	12/18	22/26	66/56
Lack of or inadequate teacher training in discipline procedures and school law	9/15	30/31	60/54
Court decisions on student misconduct	11/15	19/24	70/61
Teachers' fear of being viewed as unable to control students	14/15	31/31	55/54
Fear of student reprisal	1/6	16/21	83/74
Lack of or inadequate security personnel	6/6	8/11	85/83

NOTE: Percents may not add to 100 due to rounding.

* Teachers responded on a 6-point scale with 0 = "not at all," 1 = "very little," and 5 = "very much"

Table 9

Percent of teachers rating a factor as greatly limiting the ability of teachers in their school to maintain order, by school level and type of locale. (Delaware/National Sample)

Factor	Total %	School Level			Type of Locale		
		Elementary	Junior High	Senior High	Urban Fringe/ Urban	Small Town/ Suburban	Rural
	D/N	D/N	D/N	D/N	D/N	D/N	D/N
Factors rated as limiting teachers much or very much*			(Percent)				
Lack of or inadequate alternative placements/programs for disruptive students	45/39	48/43	49/39	38/35	46/52	42/36	46/36
Lack of student interest in learning	38/38	26/31	48/43	43/47	37/45	40/37	37/36
School or district restrictions on use of strict penalties	28/22	28/21	33/25	25/23	33/34	25/21	20/17
Lack of administrative support	19/20	22/19	25/20	11/23	21/26	17/18	19/19
Likelihood of complaint from parents	15/19	23/23	11/17	8/14	13/23	14/18	22/18
Principal/administrator fear of being sued for disciplining students	13/18	12/19	13/15	13/18	13/21	13/17	12/18
Teacher fear of being sued for disciplining students	12/18	12/22	17/14	8/14	15/21	10/15	8/21
Lack of or inadequate teacher training in discipline procedures and school law	9/15	7/15	12/17	10/13	7/20	14/13	8/13
Court decisions on student misconduct	11/15	7/13	18/19	9/17	12/24	9/14	12/11
Teacher fear of being viewed as unable to control students	14/15	18/15	12/16	11/15	13/22	16/12	14/13
Fear of student reprisal	1/6	0/5	1/5	2/6	1/11	0/3	2/5
Lack of or inadequate security personnel	6/6	5/3	10/7	5/10	8/14	5/5	2/4

* Teachers responded on a 6-point scale with 0 = "not at all", 1 = "very little", and 5 = "very much". Percents are based on teachers who indicated the factor limited them "much" or "very much", i.e., ratings of 4 or 5.

Teachers' Evaluation of the Discipline Policy of Their Schools

For the most part, the majority of teachers responding in the national and Delaware surveys provided positive evaluations of the discipline policies in their schools. In both cases, the majority of teachers indicated that their school's discipline policy was in writing (Delaware - 95%; Nationwide - 93%), was strict enough (Delaware - 57%; Nationwide - 66%); was comprehensive enough (Delaware - 69%; Nationwide 72%); was clear (Delaware - 79%; Nationwide - 80%); and was publicized enough (Delaware - 56%; Nationwide - 60%). Data from both surveys indicate that, of the criteria used to evaluate school discipline policies, consistent application is perceived to be the greatest weakness. Only 50% of teachers nationwide and 39% of Delaware teachers perceived their school's discipline policy to be consistently applied. Inconsistent application of the school's discipline policy was perceived to be more of a problem by junior and senior high school teachers than by elementary teachers. See Figure 3 and Table 10

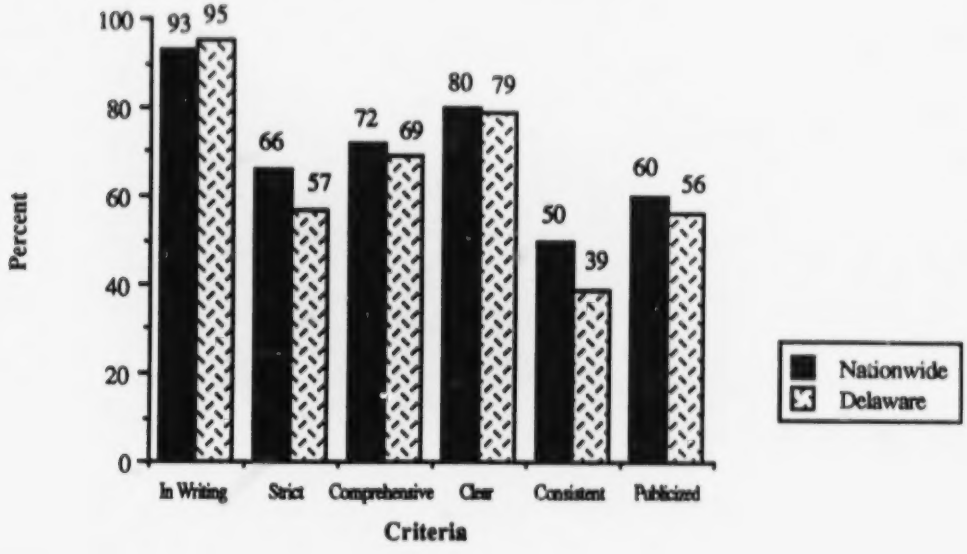
Table 10

Teacher evaluation of the discipline policy of their school, by school level and type of locale. (Delaware/National Sample)

School characteristic	Percent of teachers indicating that the discipline policy of their school was					
	In writing D/N	Strict enough D/N	Comprehensive enough D/N	Clear D/N	Consistently applied D/N	Publicized enough D/N
All teachers	95/93	57/66	69/72	79/80	39/50	56/60
School level						
Elementary	91/91	63/69	63/69	79/78	50/55	50/59
Junior High	95/96	47/65	69/76	80/83	34/45	57/60
Senior High	99/96	58/61	75/72	79/82	30/45	64/59
Type of locale						
Urban Fringe/Urban	95/91	51/65	69/69	80/79	35/48	54/57
Small Town/Suburban	93/93	65/65	71/72	81/80	47/51	60/62
Rural	96/95	61/69	61/73	75/82	35/50	56/58

Figure 3

Teacher Evaluation of Their Schools' Discipline Policies (Percent Responding Yes)



Actions of Use in Improving Discipline

Teachers were asked to evaluate how productive specified actions would be in improving discipline in their schools. The actions, listed in Table 11, include student, parent, school, principal, and teacher related actions. While teachers rated most of the actions positively, those rated as "very productive" in improving school discipline by a majority of respondents in both studies were: increased student self discipline developed at home (Delaware - 78%; Nationwide - 74%), smaller classes (Delaware - 71%; Nationwide - 63%), and increased parental support for discipline (Delaware - 67%; Nationwide - 62%). The majority of Delaware teachers also perceived three other actions as "very productive" in improving school disciple: stricter enforcement of rules against misconduct generally (54%), increased follow-up by the principal on disciplinary referrals (53%), and the principal making discipline a higher priority at school (51%). In both the national and Delaware studies, teachers in elementary schools most frequently rated increased use of positive reinforcement as "very productive". Increased training in classroom management and increased teacher autonomy in disciplining students were the actions least frequently rated as "very productive" by Delaware teachers.

Table 11

Percent of teachers indicating that action would be very productive in improving discipline, by school level and type of locale. (Delaware/National Sample)

Item	Total % D/N	School Level: Elementary D/N	School Level: Junior High D/N	School Level: Senior High D/N	Type of Locale: Urban Fringe/ Urban D/N	Type of Locale: Small Town/ Suburban D/N	Type of Locale: Rural D/N
Actions rated very productive*				(Percent)			
Increased student self discipline developed at home	78/74	74/76	83/75	77/70	76/72	75/73	87/76
Smaller classes	71/63	76/67	71/66	66/56	75/70	63/63	74/57
Increased parental support for discipline	67/62	67/62	73/68	61/60	69/66	63/60	69/63
Stricter enforcement of rules against misconduct generally	54/45	52/47	56/50	54/42	55/56	54/43	50/42
Increased followup by principal on disciplinary referrals	53/44	57/46	54/48	48/39	55/48	52/42	50/43
Immunity from lawsuits when discipline is enforced well within guidelines	46/44	47/49	46/42	44/38	46/46	50/43	36/44
Increased use of positive reinforcement for good behavior	48/43	56/50	43/42	42/34	46/47	46/42	55/42
Principal making discipline a higher priority at school	51/43	53/42	55/48	44/42	54/50	45/40	54/41
Increased informing of parents of student misconduct	40/39	44/41	42/40	34/38	40/47	40/37	40/38
Stricter enforcement of rules against drug and alcohol use	45/38	41/36	48/39	46/41	45/44	48/36	38/37
Increased training in classroom management	33/33	39/38	31/33	28/27	31/39	34/32	39/31
Easier procedures for suspension/expulsion	36/27	29/25	41/28	41/31	36/37	40/24	31/27
Increased teacher autonomy in disciplining students	28/27	33/32	32/22	18/20	28/32	29/23	26/28

* Teachers responded on a 7-point bipolar scale with 1="very counterproductive", 4 = "no effect", and 7 = "very productive". Percents are based on teachers who indicated the action would be "very productive", i.e., a rating of 7.

SUMMARY

It has been two years since the Center for Education Statistics (CES) conducted its original nationwide study entitled "Public School Teacher Perspectives on School Discipline". However, the results of a repetition of the study done by the Research and Evaluation Division of the Delaware Department of Public Instruction indicate that Delaware public school teachers still perceive school discipline to be a problem. Findings from the Delaware survey indicate that:

- Almost half of the Delaware teachers surveyed thought disruptive behavior has increased when compared with five years ago. Delaware's junior high school teachers most frequently reported an increase.
- Over one-third of Delaware teachers indicated they had seriously considered leaving the teaching profession because of student misbehavior. Delaware's junior high school teachers most frequently reported having seriously considered leaving.
- While Delaware teachers do not generally perceive student misbehavior as greatly interfering with their teaching, a majority do report that it interferes with effective learning.
- Drug or alcohol use interferes more extensively with student learning at the junior and senior high school levels.
- Both minor and major infractions tend to occur more frequently at the junior and senior high school levels.
- Over one-fourth of Delaware teachers reported being threatened by a student at some time, with junior high school teachers being threatened most frequently. Physical attacks were less frequent, although Delaware's junior high school teachers also reported being physically attacked most frequently.
- Delaware teachers indicated that about 7% of their students are habitual behavior problems. The highest mean percent (8.3%) was reported by junior high school teachers.
- The two factors cited most frequently by Delaware teachers as limiting their ability to maintain discipline where inadequate alternative placements for disruptive students and lack of student interest in learning.
- Delaware teachers generally provided positive evaluations of their school's discipline policy. The most frequent criticism was that discipline policy was inconsistently applied.
- The three actions cited by Delaware teachers as being most productive in improving school discipline are: increased student self discipline developed at home, smaller classes, and increased parental support for discipline.

A comparison of the findings from the Delaware and national surveys indicates that:

- Delaware teachers more frequently report the amount of disruptive behavior has increased when compared with five years before.

- Proportionately more Delaware teachers than teachers nationwide report they have considered leaving teaching due to student misbehavior.
- A majority of teachers both nationwide and within Delaware report that while student misbehavior has little impact on their teaching, it does interfere with effective student learning.
- Junior and senior high school teachers both nationwide and in Delaware report a higher incidence of disciplinary infractions or drug/alcohol use than teachers at the elementaty level.
- A higher percent of Delaware teachers report they have been threatened by students.
- Teachers nationwide and those in Delaware have similar perceptions of the factors limiting their ability to maintain discipline, their evaluations of school discipline policies, and their evaluations of actions to improve school discipline.

By analyzing the data contained in this report, Delaware educators should be able to gain insight into teachers' perceptions of school discipline. Some of the data should prove useful to policy makers seeking to improve discipline within Delaware schools. For example, while Delaware teachers do generally view their schools' discipline policies favorably, 43% still regard their schools' discipline policies as not strict enough, 31% regard the policies as not comprehensive enough, 44% regard the policies as not publicized enough, and 61% indicate discipline policies were not consistently applied. By providing comparisons between the perspectives of teachers in Delaware and those nationwide, this report also serves to point out that school discipline problems are national phenomena. It is unlikely that solutions will be easy or quick but recognition that a problem exists both locally and nationally is one step in the right direction.

KRM/grt
2/27/89

APPENDIX

SURVEY OF SCHOOL DISCIPLINE
CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20208-1628

(Replication study by the Delaware Department of Public Instruction. Original study performed in 1986 by Center for Education Statistics.)

Return by December 5, 1988 to: Kaye R. McCann
Delaware Department of Public Instruction
P.O. Box 1402, Dover, Delaware 19903

I. About how many students do you teach in one class? ____
In one day? ____
How many hours a day do you usually teach classes? ____

II. In Column A enter the number of times each of the following happened in your classes during the last full week.
In Column B enter the number of times you observed each of the following or had them reported to you during the last full month.
(Count occurrences not students. If one student talked back five times, count as five separate occurrences. Enter "0" if none occurred.)

	MINOR INFRACTIONS	A. IN LAST FULL WEEK
A.	Student talked back to you	____
B.	Student threw something	____
C.	Student passed a note or whispered	____
D.	Student was late for class	____
E.	Student was absent from class without permission	____
F.	Other minor disruptions of class	____
	MAJOR INFRACTIONS	**B. IN LAST FULL MONTH**
G.	Student displayed or used weapon	____
H.	Physical fight occurred between students	____
I.	Student seemed under influence of drugs or alcohol	____
J.	Student threatened you	____
K.	Student intentionally damaged property	____
L.	Item over $1.00 was stolen from you or student	____
M.	Other major infractions	____

III. On a scale of 0 to 5 (0 = not at all, 1= very little, 5= very much), indicate how much each of the following limits the ability of teachers to maintain order and discipline students in your school.

A.	Lack of or inadequate number of security personnel	____
B.	Teacher fear of being sued for disciplining students	____
C.	School principal/administrator fear of being sued for disciplining students	____
D.	Lack of or inadequate teacher training in discipline procedures and school law	____
E.	Lack of administrative support	____
F.	Likelihood of complaint from parents	____
G.	Lack of or inadequate alternative placements/programs for disruptive students	____
H.	School or district restrictions on use of strict penalties	____
I.	Court decisions on student misconduct	____
J.	Teacher fear of being viewed as unable to control students	____
K.	Lack of student interest in learning	____
L.	Fear of student reprisal	____
M.	Other (SPECIFY) _____	____

IV. A. What percent of students you teach would you consider habitual behavior problems? ____%
B. Has a student from your school ever threatened to injure you? ___ Yes; ___ No
In the last 12 months? ___ Yes; ___ No
C. Have you ever been physically attacked by a student from your school? ___ Yes; ___ No
In the last 12 months? ___ Yes; ___ No
D. Have you ever seriously considered leaving the teaching profession because of student misbehavior? ___ Yes; ___ No
In the last 12 months? ___ Yes; ___ No

Form Approved
OMB No. 1850-0596
CES 2379-26,11/86

SURVEY OF SCHOOL DISCIPLINE
CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20208-1628

(Replication study by the Delaware Department of Public Instruction. Original study performed in 1986 by Center for Education Statistics.)

V. On a scale of 1 to 7 (1 = very counterproductive, 4 = no effect, 7 = very productive) indicate how productive each of the following would be in your efforts to maintain order and discipline in your school.

A.	Principal making discipline a higher priority at school	____
B.	Increased followup by principal on disciplinary referrals	____
C.	Increased parental support for school discipline decisions	____
D.	Immunity from lawsuits when discipline is enforced well within school guidelines	____
E.	Increased informing of parents of student misconduct	____
F.	Increased student self-discipline developed at home	____
G.	Increased teacher autonomy in disciplining students	____
H.	Increased use of positive reinforcement for good behavior	____
I.	Easier procedures for suspension/expulsion	____
J.	Stricter enforcement of rules against drug/alcohol use	____
K.	Stricter enforcement of rules against misconduct generally	____
L.	Increased training in classroom management	____
M.	Smaller classes	____
N.	Other (SPECIFY) _____	____

VI. Have you had training in classroom management or discipline management techniques in the last 2 years? ___ Yes; ___ No

VII. Is the discipline policy at your school:

		Yes	No
A.	In writing?	___	___
B.	Strict enough?	___	___
C.	Comprehensive enough?	___	___
D.	Clear?	___	___
E.	Consistently applied?	___	___
F.	Publicized enough?	___	___

VIII. A. In general, to what extent does student behavior interfere with:
Your teaching?
___ To a great extent; ___ To a moderate extent; ___ To a small extent; ___ No at all.
Effective learning?
___ To a great extent; ___ To a moderate extent; ___ To a small extent; ___ Not at all.

B. To what extent does drug and alcohol use by students interfere with learning in your school?
___ To a great extent; ___ To a moderate extent; ___ To a small extent; ___ Not at all.

C. Compared with 5 years ago, is the amount of disruptive student classroom behavior at your school:
___ Much less now; ___ Somewhat less now; ___ About the same;
___ Somewhat more now; ___ Much more now; ___ Don't know.

IX A. What is the average daily rate of absenteeism in your class? _____%

B. How many years have you been teaching? _____ yrs.
In this school? _____ yrs.
Sex: _____ Female; _____ Male.

C. What grades are you currently teaching? (list all) _____
If you primarily teach certain subjects, list the subjects. _____

Person completing this form:_____
School _____ Phone _____
Please give the best day/time to call you, just in case we have any questions:
Day _____ Time _____

Form Approved
OMB No. 1850-0596
CES 2379-26,11/86